

TESTIMONY FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 22, 2012

Jessica Ferreira

Opposing
H.B. No. 5014

AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2013
(DMHAS)

Distinguished Senators and Representatives

My name is Jessica Ferreira. I am a young adult from Forestville CT and a member of Keep the Promise Coalition. I have been in DMHAS services since I was 18 years old. I have been diagnosed with depression, PTSD, bi-polar, and anxiety disorder. I am here to share my story tell you why DMHAS services are so important to me.

When I was 18 years old, I transitioned from my DCF group home to a young adult assisted living program funded by DMHAS. I wasn't ready for that transition. I left the program and ended up homeless, pregnant, on the streets and scared to call my family for help. I walked the streets for a while and then decided I was so depressed that I needed to check myself into a hospital. I stayed on the unit for one week until I ended up in a shelter in South Norwalk. Being there was horrible. I walked the streets every day. Sometimes I didn't know when or where I would get my next meal. I lost my son to DCF custody. At this point I was 19 years old – far from home. Imagine yourselves in my place.

While I was at the shelter, my parents sought me out and said I could come back home to live. Also, while I was at the shelter, my grandma – someone very important to me – passed away. So, I wanted to be back home. While home with my family, I reconnected with CMHA – the community mental health provider in my community and became involved with Young Adult Services again. That's where my life really turned around.

I now have a case manager who helps me budget my money, get the medical care I need, deal with benefit issues, and is there for me when I need someone. I have a therapist who is helping me process my feelings and deal with my emotional problems. I received services from an occupational therapist who helped me learn how cook, clean, do laundry – all thing I need to learn to live on my own. And now my case manager is helping find my own place to live. I participate in groups that help with making friends, process my feelings, and overcome my loneliness. I just got a job and will soon begin my training to be a warm line operator at CMHA. As a warm line operator I will listen and help others who need someone to talk to, who are having problems, or are feeling unsafe. So now, instead being unsafe and alone myself, I am helping others. I also help other young adults in the young adult program at CMHA. I am the president of the Psychosocial Rehab Club there and a mentor to others.

So imagine yourself in my place now. What a ways I have come. I used to have no self-esteem. Now I have enough self-esteem to be coming and testifying before you now. I have enough to help others. I am a happy young adult, looking for a brighter future, and thankful for the services I hope you will continue to support.